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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 03966

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CXABU:

ACTION: POL

INFO: PAO RSO AMB DCM MEPI P/M ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL

CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MSISON

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CLEARED: DCM:RALBRIGHT POL:JM ECON:OJ PA:HOW CG:JD

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6646

INFO RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 4455

RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RHRMDAB/COMUSNAVCENT

RUEOMCE/USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 003966

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2014

TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC TC

SUBJECT: UAE MOURNS THE DEATH OF ITS LEADER

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: THE UAE IS MOURNING THE DEATH OF ITS PRESIDENT, SHEIKH ZAYED BIN SULTAN AL NAHYAN, WHO PASSED AWAY TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, AFTER A LONG ILLNESS. OVER THE PAST 24 HOURS, THE UAE HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS AND VISITING DIGNITARIES WHO HAVE COME TO PAY THEIR FINAL RESPECTS. SHEIKH ZAYED, WHO HAS RULED THE UAE SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1971, HAS BEEN PRAISED FOR HIS WISE LEADERSHIP, HUMANITARIAN SPIRIT, AND TOLERANCE. THERE HAS BEEN A PREDICTABLE OUTPOURING OF SYMPATHY FROM AROUND THE WORLD. ZAYED'S OLDEST SON, KHALIFA BIN ZAYED, IS THE RULER OF ABU DHABI AND IS NOW EFFECTIVELY RUNNING THE COUNTRY. SHEIKH MAKTOUM BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM, THE TITULAR RULER OF DUBAI AND TITULAR PRIME MINISTER OF THE UAE, WILL SERVE AS ACTING PRESIDENT FOR THE NEXT THIRTY DAYS. END SUMMARY.

SUBDUED ATMOSPHERE

¶2. (U) THOUGH SHEIKH ZAYED'S HEALTH HAD BEEN PRECARIOUS FOR SOME TIME, AND RUMORS OF HIS IMMINENT DEMISE HAD BEEN CIRCULATING FOR WEEKS, HIS DEATH PROVOKED A FEELING OF PROFOUND SADNESS AND LOSS AMONG UAE RESIDENTS OF ALL NATIONALITIES. RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS BROADCAST PRAYERS AND KORANIC VERSES. MOST BUSINESSES HAVE CLOSED FOR THREE DAYS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS CLOSED FOR EIGHT DAYS AS A 40-DAY PERIOD OF MOURNING BEGAN ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3.

13. (U) THERE HAS BEEN A MODEST INCREASE IN SECURITY ON THE STREETS AROUND THE PALACES OF THE LEADERSHIP. THE MILITARY RECALLED TROOPS FROM LEAVE STATUS TO FILL THE INCREASED SECURITY REQUIREMENTS. SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED TO KEY INSTALLATIONS AND ARE PROTECTING THE SCORES OF FOREIGN AND LOCAL DIGNITARIES WHO HAVE BEEN ARRIVING IN THE CAPITAL TO EXPRESS THEIR CONDOLENCES. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT 60 BUSLOADS OF SECURITY PERSONNEL WERE DISPATCHED BY THE NORTHERN EMIRATES TO PROTECT THE HEADS OF STATE COMING FOR THE FUNERAL. SEVERAL MAJOR HOTELS, INCLUDING THE HILTON, INTERCONTINENTAL, AND SHERATON, TRANSFERRED GUESTS TO OTHER HOTELS TUESDAY NIGHT TO ACCOMMODATE THE HUNDREDS OF DIGNITARIES, INCLUDING RULING FAMILY MEMBERS FROM THE GULF STATES.

14. (U) ON TUESDAY NIGHT, ROADS LEADING TO NEW ABU DHABI RULER SHEIKH KHALIFA'S AL BATEEN PALACE WERE CROWDED WITH MOURNERS' VEHICLES. OTHER THAN THAT, THE USUAL BUSTLING ATMOSPHERE OF DOWNTOWN ABU DHABI HAD BEEN REPLACED WITH AN EERIE STILLNESS. MALLS AND OTHER OUTLETS REMOVED ALL COLORFUL DECORATIONS THAT WERE DISPLAYED FOR RAMADAN AND MOST GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS AND MANY PRIVATE BUSINESSES TURNED OFF THEIR LIGHTS AND SHUTTERED THEIR WINDOWS OUT OF RESPECT, SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGING THE APPEARANCE OF THE NORMALLY ENERGETIC NIGHTTIME LANDSCAPE OF THE CITY. OVERNIGHT, THE ABU DHABI MUNICIPALITY DRAPED BLACK CLOTH OVER MANY DOWNTOWN BILLBOARDS ALONG THE STREETS.

15. (SBU) NEWS OF SHEIKH ZAYED'S PASSING MOTIVATED MANY CITY RESIDENTS IN ABU DHABI AND DUBAI TO RUSH TO SUPERMARKETS TO STOCK UP ON ESSENTIAL ITEMS SINCE THE OUTLETS ARE EXPECTED TO REMAIN CLOSED FOR THE NEXT THREE DAYS. MANY ATMS RAN OUT OF CASH TUESDAY NIGHT, BUT WERE RESTOCKED BY WEDNESDAY MORNING. IN DUBAI, CHANGES WERE LESS STRIKING, WITH SUPERMARKETS AND MANY SHOPS OPEN FOR BUSINESS AT MID-DAY WEDNESDAY AND BEACHES WELL POPULATED WITH BATHERS. UAE NATIONALS IN DUBAI (WHO MAKE UP LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION) WERE NOTICEABLY SUBDUE AND UNSMILING IN PUBLIC. EXPRESSIONS OF CONDOLENCES WERE INEVITABLY ACKNOWLEDGED BUT FOLLOWED QUICKLY WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT "THIS HAS BEEN EXPECTED FOR A LONG TIME."

MOURNED BY PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

16. (U) OTHER ARAB STATES REACTED TO THE DEATH OF SHEIKH ZAYED BY DECLARING PERIODS OF MOURNING AND ISSUING CONDOLENCE STATEMENTS. EGYPT'S PRESIDENT MUBARAK CALLED ZAYED "A DEAR FRIEND, AND A LEADER WHO REPRESENTED THE BEST OF MANKIND." ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL AMR MOUSSA CHARACTERIZED ZAYED AS "A

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NOBLE KNIGHT WHOSE LIFE WAS MARKED BY A CONSCIENTIOUS, MEASURED, AND WISE LEADERSHIP." JORDAN AND BAHRAIN BOTH DECREED GOVERNMENT CLOSURES OF THREE DAYS AND A 40-DAY PERIOD OF MOURNING. YEMEN, MOROCCO, OMAN AND PALESTINE DECREED A THREE-DAY MOURNING PERIOD AND LEBANON DECREED A 48-HOUR MOURNING. THE SENTIMENTS OF THE ARAB LEADERS CAN BE REFLECTED IN THE STATEMENT BY THE KUWAIT ENERGY MINISTER SHEIKH AHMAD, WHO SAID, "TODAY WE LOST THE SAGE OF THE ARAB WORLD."

17. (U) THE U.S. EMBASSY CONDOLENCE STATEMENT MADE THE DEADLINE FOR THE GULF NEWS, AL-ITTIHAD, AND AL-KHALEEJ NEWSPAPERS. IN FACT, OUR STATEMENT WAS THE ONLY FOREIGN EMBASSY STATEMENT PUBLISHED. IN THE SEMI-GOVERNMENT AL-ITTIHAD (CIRCULATION 66,000), THE STATEMENT WAS PLACED ON PAGE 2 ALONG WITH THE OFFICIAL NOTICE OF THE MOURNING PERIOD. IN GULF NEWS (CIRCULATION 95,000) IT APPEARED AT THE TOP OF PAGE 4. SECRETARY POWELL'S STATEMENT WAS PROMINENTLY MENTIONED

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BY ABU DHABI TV.

IN THE INTERIM

¶8. (C) ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 53 OF THE UAE CONSTITUTION, VICE PRESIDENT MAKTOUM BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM (TITULAR RULER OF DUBAI, WHO NORMALLY SPENDS MUCH OF HIS TIME IN THE U.K.) WILL SERVE AS ACTING PRESIDENT FOR A PERIOD OF 30 DAYS. DURING THOSE 30 DAYS, THE UAE SUPREME COUNCIL, CONSISTING OF THE SEVEN RULERS OF THE SEVEN EMIRATES, SHOULD MEET TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT. WHILE MAKTOUM WILL BE THE TITULAR PRESIDENT, REAL DECISION-MAKING POWER WILL LIE WITH THE NEW RULER OF ABU DHABI, SHEIKH KHALIFA, WHO WILL LIKELY CONSULT CLOSELY WITH CROWN PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN ZAYED, HIS OTHER BROTHERS, AND WITH RULERS OF THE OTHER EMIRATES (ESPECIALLY DUBAI'S DE FACTO RULER, SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL-MAKTOUM).

SISON

3 Nov UAE Feeling of Zayed's Passing

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